

DE CONSOLACIONE PHILOSOPHIE. BOOK III. PROSE I.

Iam cantum illa finierat.

If this she hadde ended hir song, when the sweetnesse of hir ditee hadde thoroughperced me that was desirous of herkinge, and I astoned hadde yit streighte myn eres, that is to seyn, to herkne the bet what she wolde seye; so that a litel hereafter I seyde thus: O thou that art sovereyn comfort of anguissous corages, so thou hast remounted & norissed me with the weighte of thy sentences and with delyt of thy singinge; so that I trowe nat now that I be unparigal to the strokes of fortune: as who seyth, I dar wel now suffren al the assautes of fortune, and wel defende me fro hir. And tho remedies which that thou seydest herbiform weren right sharpe, nat only that I am nat agrisen of hem now, but I, desirous of heringe, axe gretely to heren the remedies.

WHAN seyde she thus: That felede I ful wel, quod she, when that thou, ententif & stille, ravisshest my wordes; and I abood til that thou haddest swich habite of thy thought as thou hast now; or elles til that I myself hadde maked to thee the same habit, which that is a more verray thing. And certes, the remenaunt of thinges that ben yit to seye ben swiche, that first whan men tasten hem they ben bytinge, but whan they ben receyved withinne a wight, than ben they swete. But for thou seyest that thou art so desirous to herkne hem, with how gret brenninge woldest thou glowen, yif thou wistest whider I wol leden thee!

HIDER is that? quod I. To thilke verray welefulnesse, quod she, of whiche thyn herte dremeth; but for as moche as thy sighte is occupied and disturbed by imaginacioun of erthely thinges, thou mayst nat yit seen thilke selve welefulnesse.

NO, quod I, and shewe me what is thilke verray welefulnesse, I preyre thee, withoute taryinge. That wole I gladly don, quod she, for the cause of thee; but I wol first marken thee by wordes and I wol enforcen me to enformen thee thilke false cause of blisfulnesse that thou more knowest; so that, whan thou hast fully biholden thilke false goodes, & torned thyn eyen to that other syde, thou mowe knowe the cleernesse of verray blisfulnesse.

Metre I.

Qui serere ingenuum volet agrum.

WHOSO wole sowe a feeld plentifulous, lat him first delivere it fro thornes, and herve asunder with his hook the bussches & the fern, so that the corn may comen hevy of eres & of greynes. Hony is the more swete, yif mouthes han first tasted savoures that ben wikkid. The sterres shynen more agreeably whan the wind Nothus leteth his ploungy blastis; & after that Lucifer the day sterre hath chased away the derke night, the day the fairere ledeth the rosen hors of the sonne. And right so thou, biholdinge first the false goodes, bigin to withdrawn thynekke fro the yok of erthely affeccions; and afterward the verray goodes shollen entren into thy corage.

Prose II.

Tunc defixo paululum visu.

WHOFastnede she a litel the sighte of hir eyen, and withdrew hir right as it were into the streite sete of hir thought; and bigan to speke right thus: Alle the cures, quod she, of mortal folk, whiche that travaylen hem in many maner studies, goon certes by diverse weyes, but natheles they enforcen hem alle to comen only to oon ende of blisfulnesse. And blisfulnesse is swiche a good, that whoso that hath gotten it, he ne may, over that, nothing more desyre. And this thing is forsothe the sovereyn good that conteyneth in himself alle maner goodes; to the whiche good yif ther failede any thing, it mighte nat ben cleped sovereyn good: for thanne were ther som good, out of this ilke sovereyn good, that mighte ben desired. Now is it cleer and certein thanne, that blisfulnesse is a parfit estat by the congregacioun of alle goodes; the whiche blisfulnesse, as I have seyde, alle mortal folk enforcen hem to geten by diverse weyes. For why the covetise of verray good is naturelly yplanted in the hertes of men; but the miswandringe errour misledeth hem into false goodes. Of the whiche men, som of hem wenen that sovereyn good be to liven withoute nede of any thing, and travaylen hem to be haboundaunt of richesses. And som other men demen that sovereyn good be, for to ben right digne of reverence; & enforcen hem to ben reverenced

among hir neighbours by the honours that they han ygeten. And some folk ther ben that holden, that right heigh power besowen good, & enforcen hem for to regnen, or elles to joignen hem to hem that regnen. And it semeth to some other folk, that noblesse of renoun be the sovereyn good; and hasten hem to geten glorious name by the arts of werre and of pees. And many folk mesuren and gessen that sovereyn good be joye and gladnesse, & wenen that it be right blisful thing to ploungen hem in voluptuous delyt. And ther ben folk that entrechaungen the causes and the endes of thise foreseyde goodes, as they that desiren richesses to han power & delytes; or elles they desiren power for to han money, or for cause of renoun. In these thinges, and in swiche othere thinges, is torned alle the entencioun of desiringes and of werkes of men; as thus: noblesse and favour of people, whiche that yeveth to men, as it semeth hem, a maner cleernesse of renoun; & wyf and children, that men desiren for cause of delyt and of merinesse. But forsothe, frendes ne sholden nat be rekned among the goodes of fortune, but of vertu; for it is a ful holy maner thing. Alle these othere thinges, forsothe, ben taken for cause of power or elles for cause of delyt.

CERTES, now am I redy to referren the goodes of the body to thise forseyde thinges aboven; for it semeth that strengthe & gretnesse of body yeven power and worthinesse, and that beautee and swiftnesse yeven noblesse & glorie of renoun; and hele of body semeth yeven delyt. In alle these thinges it semeth only that blisfulnesse is desired. For why thilke thing that every man desireth most over alle thinges, he demeth that it be the sovereyn good; but I have defyned that blisfulnesse is the sovereyn good; for which every wight demeth, that thilke estat that he desireth over alle thinges, that it be blisfulnesse.

NO hast thou thanne biforn thyn eyen almost al the purposed forme of the welefulnesse of mankinde, that is to seyn, richesses, honours, power, and glorie, and delyts. The whiche delyt only considerede Epicurus, and juged and establiished that delyt is the sovereyn good; for as moche as alle othere thinges, as him thoughte, birefte away joye & mirthe fram the herte. But I retorne ayein to the studies of men, of whiche men the corage alwey reherseth and seketh the sovereyn good, al be it so that it be with a derked memorie; but he not by whiche path, right as a dronken man not nat by whiche path he may retorne him to his hous. Semeth it thanne that folk folyn and erren that enforcen hem to have nede of nothing?

Certes, ther is non other thing that may so wel performe blisfulnesse, as an estat plentifulous of alle goodes, that ne hath nede of non other thing, but that is suffisaunt of himself unto himself. And folyn swiche folk thanne, that wenen that thilke thing that is right good, that it be eek right worthy of honour & of reverence? Certes, nay, for that thing is neither foul ne worthy to ben despised, that wel neigh al the entencioun of mortal folk travaylen for to geten it. And power, oughte nat that eek to ben rekned amonges goodes? What elles? for it is nat to wene that thilke thing, that is most worthy of alle thinges, be feble and withoute strengthe. And cleernesse of renoun, oughte that to ben despised? Certes, ther may no man forsake, that al thing that is right excellent and noble, that it ne semeth to ben right cleer and renomed. For certes, it nedeth nat to seye, that blisfulnesse be nat anguissous ne drery, ne subgit to grevaunces ne to sorwes, sin that in right litel thinges folk seken to have and to usen that may delyten hem. Certes, these ben the thinges that men wolen & desiren to geten. And for this cause desiren they richesses, dignitees, regnes, glorie, and delices. For therby wenen they to han suffisaunce, honour, power, renoun, and gladnesse. Than is it good, that men seken thus by so many diverse studies. In whiche desyr it may lightly ben shewed how gret is the strengthe of nature; for how so that men han diverse sentences and discordinge, algates men acorden alle in lovinge the ende of good.

Metre II.

Quantas rerum flectat habenas.

Ifyketh me to shewe, by subtil song, with slakke and delitable soun of strenges, how that Nature, mighty, enclineth and flittereth the governments of thinges, and by whiche lawes she, purveyable, kepeth the grete world; & how she, bindinge, restreyeth alle thinges by a bonde that may nat ben unbounde. Al be it so that the lyouns of the contre of Pene beren the faire chaynes, and taken metes of the handes of folk that yeven it hem, and dreden hir sturdy maystres of whiche they ben wont to suffren betinges: yif that hir horrible mouthes ben bebled, that is to seyn, of bestes devoured, hir corage of time passed, that hath ben ydel & rested, repeyareth ayein; and they roren grevously and remembren on hir nature, & slaken hir nekkes fram hir chaynes unbounde; and hirmayster, first totorn with bloody tooth, assayeth the wode wrathes of hem; this is to seyn, they freten hir mayster. And the jangel-

Boethius de
Consolacione
Philosophie.
Book III.